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be seen more clearly than on the ground save after continuous study; and those who know the skill of America's foremost delineator of geologic and archeologic landscape will appreciate, but not overestimate, his modest dismissal of them as "the merest sketches." Although the work professes to be no more than an outline, it is done strong and clear.

W J McGEE.

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*Wand-Malereien von Mitla. Eine Mexikanische Bilderschrift in Fresko. Nach eigenen an Ort und Stelle aufgenommenen Zeichnungen herausgegebenen und erläutert. Von Dr E. Seler. A. Asher und Co. Berlin, 1895, 58 pp., 18 pls., fol.*

The wonderful ruins of Mitla, in Central America, have been well described, with fair illustrations, by Charnay, Bandelier, and others, so that their general appearance is well known to archeologists. A detailed study, accompanied by careful excavations of the pyramids and "palaces," remains yet to be made. The mural paintings which once decorated the rooms have been lately figured by Professor Starr, of Chicago University, and are now reproduced in color in the beautifully printed memoir above mentioned.

One of the interesting novelties of Dr Seler's contribution is his attempt to identify the figures represented in these paintings, and to do this he brings to the interpretation a broad knowledge of Mexican pictography, based on field explorations and documentary studies.

The largest number of these mutilated frescoes represent a mythical personage, Quetzalcoatl, whose legendary history played such a prominent part in the mythologies of Mexico and Central America.

As pointed out by Dr Seler, these pictures resemble those of the Codex Borgia, from which likenesses he is led to an important conclusion that this beautiful codex must have originated not far from the place where the artist of the Mitla work derived his mythological inspiration. It is possible that both show the influence of a Nahua-speaking stock, but not necessarily those Nahuas a modified branch of whom in the valley of Mexico obtained such great political power and are ordinarily called Aztecs. This latter energetic branch developed the cult of Huitzilopochli to such an extent that it overpowered that of Quetzalcoatl, but

among other branches the latter was of far greater importance. The great sanctuary of Quetzalcoatl was at Cholula, and neighbors of Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Mayas disseminated this component far and wide. It is not improbable that from this substratum of mythology, which extends as far as the traces of the Nahuatl tongue have been detected, may have sprung the widespread Plumed Serpent cult of Arizona, Mexico, and Central America. The much-abused name Toltec, not as a designation of a distinct people, but rather as a cultus stage, may conveniently be used to designate this influence.

The figures of Quetzalcoatl in the mural paintings of Mitla resemble in general characters those of the god "B" of Mayan codices, which, so far as it goes, is instructive as regards the identification of "B" as originally "The Plumed-serpent god." The Mayan and Zapotec variants appear to be traceable to the same primitive conceptions. Seler likewise finds pictures of the Sun god, the God of Death, and other personages among the Mitla wall paintings.

One of the most valuable parts of the memoir is a German translation of Father Burgoa's description of Mitla, a work so rare that the translator searched in vain for a copy of the original in German and Austrian libraries. Although it is sometimes questioned whether Burgoa ever saw Mitla, his description, published in Mexico in 1674, of this sanctuary and its mortuary crypts, in which "kings," priests, and "nobles" were interred, is valuable, and Seler has rendered an important service to science in thus making this old account available. Naturally he finds it difficult to identify the present ruined chambers with those described by Burgoa, but his efforts in that direction are commendable.

The typography and illustrations are excellent, but the size of the memoir makes it awkward for study, and some of the unduly enlarged figures would not have suffered by reduction and a more compact arrangement. A good index accompanies the work. The memoir is appropriately dedicated to Count Loubat, who has most generously contributed to the study of Mexican antiquities.

J. WALTER FEWKES.